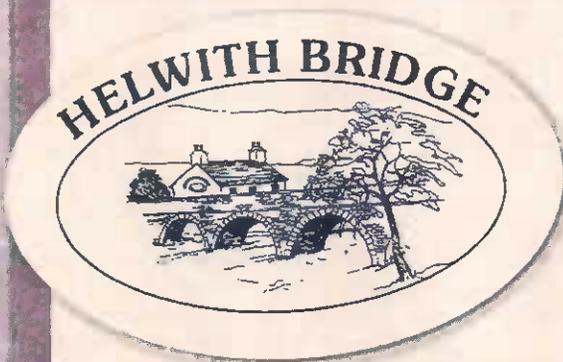


Pub of the month

The Helwith Bridge, Horton-in-Ribblesdale, North Yorkshire



THE Helwith Bridge is situated in a small village that goes by the same name, near Horton-in-Ribblesdale. It's on the route of the Ribble Way and close to the Pennine Way, so it's perhaps not surprising that the pub is popular with hillwalkers – and a favourite of TGO's John Manning. But it wasn't the walking that brought landlord Colin Hall here nine and a half years ago; it was the nearby Settle to Carlisle railway – that and the countryside.

The pub attracts a friendly and varied clientele; hillwalkers, cavers and Colin's occasional fellow trainspotter get to hang out with the regulars, who may be a small bunch but certainly make the most of their local boozier. "Oh yes, it's definitely a community pub, we only have about probably 10 houses here and the pub, no shops or anything like that," says Colin. "So every tea time everybody gathers on the way home."

They're obviously a good-humoured crowd too. Type in www.helwithbridge.com to your web browser and you'll find an amusingly amateurish website – created, as Colin explains, by "one of the lads" – on which, under the title "Welcome to Roysten Vasey" are photographs of about 20 regulars. There are obviously some in-jokes going on here, but don't let that put you off; you don't have to be a local to be made at home. "Oh yeah, everybody's welcome – very much so" enthuses Colin. "It's got a slate floor so it's ideal for walkers – they can come in in muddy boots and there's always a fire on." So he doesn't mind a bit of muck then? "Oh no, that's what we're here for!"

Originally built around 1820, the Helwith Bridge used to be a canteen for workers at the local quarry; it was turned into a pub about 50 years later at the time of the arrival of the railway. Nowadays, it's what Colin Hall calls a "very basic country pub" that serves eight real ales (the current selection includes Old Speckled Hen, Caledonian 80/-, Deuchars IPA, Webster's, John Smiths, Wells Bombadier and a version of Three Peaks Brewery's Pen-y-ghent, branded up as Helwith Bridge) and has received three CAMRA pub of the season awards.

"The staff are all very friendly," says Colin. "And the place is nice and warm. We have weird opening hours, I must admit – Monday to Thursday we don't open until half two but we're open for the rest of the day. And Friday, Saturday, Sunday we open at 12 and stay open till closing time."

Occasionally the pub hosts a disco for a party or there might be an impromptu appearance by a local folk group, but most of the time customers keep themselves entertained. There's also food – the full menu of bar meals is offered on Thursday and Friday evenings, Saturday lunchtimes and evenings, and Sundays from 12pm till 7pm. But as long as the pub's open, you won't have to go hungry – Colin's team are quite happy to turn around a pie, chips and peas at any time of day.

Helwith Bridge: 01729 860 220

To recommend a pub
or tell us about your
walking club,
e-mail: editorial@tgomagazine.co.uk

